

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: April 21, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 3974

Bill Sargent, Former Chief Deputy Clerk for Elections, Galveston County

Self

Galveston, TX

I support HB 3974, especially the language Section 4 (c) which prohibits the use of commercial post office boxes as a residence for voter registration purposes. The Texas Election Code does not currently explicitly prohibit the use of a USPS post box as a residence. It does say a person must use their "residence address," the place where they live. I would suggest to you that it is impossible to live (that is reside) in a post office box, be it at a U.S. post office or at a commercial facility. Can you sleep in a post office box? Do post boxes have restrooms? Can a person even fit into a post box? The obvious answer is no. Consequently, the use of a post office box as a residence address should be prohibited.

The author might want to consider adding a penalty for willfully attempting to use such as a residence address for voter registration purposes. Additionally, the author might want to empower the Secretary of State to withhold Title 19 funds when such discrepancies are discovered, or are brought to a county voter registrar's attention, and said registrar fails to promptly address this problem.

Chris Garrett

NA

Corpus Christi, TX

Vote yes

Consistent with other residency requirements

Janet Dudding

Self

Bryan, TX

OPPOSE

Deon Starnes

self - none

Denton, TX

In Wichita County there is a single family residence, 4 bedroom home that has over 500 registered voters of those 191 voted, most by mail. The DA feels that the residency laws as currently written are unclear, and precludes him being able to do anything about it. When a county only has 83,000 + voters and only 40,000 and change vote, this could have a significant impact on the election outcome.

shawn flanagan

self/retired

corpus christi, TX

vote yes, helps the process go smoothly

Jessie Carlson

self

Corpus Chrsiti, TX

Vote yes.

Alan Vera, Chairman

Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee

Houston, TX

TESTIMONY
HB 3974 Paul
FOR THE BILL

Alan Vera, Chairman, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee, testifying IN SUPPORT OF HB 3974.

Voter eligibility has 2 levels:

1. Is the voter generally eligible to vote in elections in Texas? Age, citizenship, etc.
2. Is the voter specifically eligible to vote in elections for the particular district or entity to which the ballot applies? That eligibility hinges on residence address.

In Harris County, we have data which strongly suggests that voters are registering to vote at an address which allows them to influence a specific election. On July 30, 2018 I filed a voter registration residency challenge with the Harris County Voter Registrar. I challenged the residencies of 4,027 registered voters because their “residence” addresses were commercial post office boxes (UPS Store, Mail Boxes, Etc. and so on).

As usual, I got push back from the registrar and the county attorney, claiming that my challenge was not based on “personal knowledge> The Secretary of State at the time (Rolando B. Pablos) issued an opinion letter stating that my challenge was correct and the the TEC definition of “residence” was “the place where you live.” So the registrar had to send notices to all 4,027 voters. In that year we had a runoff for the office of Houston Mayor. The incumbent won by 4,000 votes. I’m sure that was just a coincidence.

Within 30 days after the runoff election date, half of the voters I’d challenged moved their registrations to another address, out of the commercial post office boxes.

The provisions of this bill will help end this practice of “packing the district” for an election. It’s important that we stop this abuse of voter eligibility. Please refer HB 3972 favorably to the full House.

Bill Sargent

Self

Galveston, TX

An additional comment. Witnesses have said that people who have no address will not be allowed to register to vote. This is not

the case. Under current law a person may register to vote by describing where they live if they don't have an actual address (like I live under the overpass at 25th and Vine). This bill only says that you cannot use a post office box at a commercial establishment such as a UPS store. As I said earlier, a person cannot live in a P.O. box! Current law, and this bill, don't say a person may not use a post box as a mailing address. In fact the registration form has a place on it that allows a person to use a P.O. box as a mailing address. Allowing a person to use a P.O. box as their residence opens up the ability for a person to say they have "moved" into a particular district so they can vote in a particular race while they actually have not moved and they actually live in another jurisdiction. The committee should pass this bill and pass it to the floor with the recommendation that it be adopted.

RICHARD BOHNERT

self A/C contractor

COMFORT, TX

My name is Richard Bohnert. I live in Comfort, Texas Kerr County and I am in favor of HB 3974. Please pass this bill out of committee. Thank you.

Paula Kothmann

self

Austin, TX

It's outrageous that you're trying to disenfranchise voters because you can't figure out where they live. I may move several times in a year. I DARE you to try to disenfranchise me. You need an law to protect people like you who they to cancel legitimate voters unjustly. We saw how White Supremacists used this tactic in Georgia and we won't stand for it in Texas.

Bonnie Seelig

Self Retired

Spicewood, TX

Address is important. It proves that a person is ALIVE. Address proves that the person DOES OR DOES NOT LIVE IN TEXAS. It can assist in proving that a voter is a citizen or not.

A single address is often used by hundreds of LEGAL AND/OR ILLEGAL VOTERS as seen in Harris County. When the voter rolls are not accurate, our elections cannot be trusted. Our government is no better than a 3rd world country. If that is the purpose, to create a 3rd world country in Texas, we'll see the answer soon enough as the days move on without overwhelming support for election integrity.

Virginia Sidrony

Self Fort Bend County VDVR

Sugar Land, TX

Chairman Cain, Vice-Chairman Gonzalez, and other Elections Committee members, my name is Virginia Sidrony. I am a long-time resident of Fort Bend County, and I am a constituent of Representative Jetton.

I am extremely concerned that some of these bills do not really have anything to do with "Voting Integrity", but actually have more to do with "Voter Suppression".

HB 3974 - Lines 22-27 on page 1 and line 1 on page 2, are essentially overkill. I am concerned that it not only makes it more difficult for voters, but it also oversteps the bounds of their privacy. I fear that a large majority of voters will see "Voter Suppression", not "Voting Integrity".

I sincerely hope this Committee will give careful consideration to my concerns, as well as those of others, relative to this

worrisome bill.
Thank you.

Beth Biesel
Texas Eagle Forum
Dallas, TX

Texas Eagle Forum supports this bill. Legitimate residency is a nonnegotiable prerequisite for voting.
